

What Is Claimed Is:

1. A rotary knob (5, 6, 10, 20, 30, 90, 100, 110, 120) for operating a motor vehicle (1) by rotating the rotary knob (5, 6, 10, 20, 30, 90, 100, 110, 120), the rotary knob (5, 6, 10, 20, 30, 90, 100, 110, 120) having an at least partially transparent display layer (14, 214) which rotates along in response to an angular movement of the rotary knob (5, 6, 10, 20, 30, 90, 100, 110, 120), and a controllable light source (19, 21) for displaying changeable information items on the display layer (14, 214).
2. The rotary knob (5, 6, 10, 20, 30, 90, 100, 110, 120) as recited in Claim 1, wherein the display layer (14, 214) has a side (15, 215) facing an operator and a side (16, 216) facing away from the operator, the side (16, 216) facing away from an operator being able to be illuminated by the controllable light source (19, 21).
3. The rotary knob (5, 6, 10, 20, 30, 90, 100, 110, 120) as recited in Claim 1 or 2, wherein, when viewed from the side (15, 215) of the display layer (14, 214) facing the operator, the controllable light source (19, 21) is situated in back of the display layer (14, 214).
4. The rotary knob (5, 6, 10, 20, 30, 90, 100, 110, 120) as recited in Claim 1, 2, or 3, wherein the controllable light source (21) includes a laser (24).
5. The rotary knob (5, 6, 10, 20, 30, 90, 100, 110, 120) as recited in one of the preceding claims, wherein a movable light beam may be produced by the controllable light source (21).

6. The rotary knob (5, 6, 10, 20, 30, 90, 100, 110, 120) as recited in one of the preceding claims, wherein it has a scattering lens (31) situated between the controllable (21) light source and the display layer (14, 214).
7. The rotary knob (5, 6, 10, 20, 30, 90, 100, 110, 120) as recited in one of the preceding claims, wherein a reflecting mirror (91, 101, 131, 141) for deflecting a light beam is situated between the controllable light source (21) and the display layer (14, 214).
8. The rotary knob (5, 6, 10, 20, 30, 90, 100, 110, 120) as recited in Claim 7, wherein the reflecting mirror (101) is curved.
9. The rotary knob (5, 6, 10, 20, 30, 90, 100, 110, 120) as recited in one of the preceding claims, wherein a prism (111, 121) for deflecting a light beam is situated between the controllable light source and the display layer (14, 214).
10. The rotary knob (5, 6, 10, 20, 30, 90, 100, 110, 120) as recited in Claim 9, wherein the prism (121) has a curved reflecting surface (123).
11. An operator device (130) for operating a motor vehicle (1), wherein the operator device (130) has at least two rotary knobs as recited in one of the preceding claims.
12. The operator device (130) as recited in Claim 11, wherein the rotary knobs may be used in a functionally independent manner.
13. The operator device as recited in Claim 11 or 12, wherein different information items are simultaneously

displayable on the display layers (14, 214) of the rotary knobs.

14. The operator device as recited in Claim 11, 12, or 13, wherein the rotary knobs have a common light source (21) for displaying information on their display layers (14, 214).
15. A multifunction operating device (40) for a motor vehicle, the multifunction operating device having a display (3), wherein the multifunction operating device (40) has a rotary knob as recited in one of Claims 1 through 10 and/or an operator device (8) as recited in Claim 11, 12, 13, or 14 for preselecting and/or selecting menu items displayable on the display (3).
16. The multifunction operating device as recited in Claim 15, wherein menu items displayable on the display (3) are simultaneously displayable on the display layer (14, 214).
17. A steering wheel (2) for a motor vehicle (1), wherein it has a rotary knob (5, 6) as recited in one of Claims 1 through 10 or an operator device (130) as recited in Claim 11, 12, 13, or 14.
18. The steering wheel (2) for a motor vehicle (1) as recited in Claim 18, wherein at least one rotary knob (5, 6) is situated less than 4 cm away from an edge (7) of the steering wheel (1).
19. The steering wheel (2) for a motor vehicle (1) as recited in Claim 18, wherein at least one rotary knob (5, 6) is situated less than 3 cm away from an edge (7) of the steering wheel (2).

20. A motor vehicle (1), wherein it has a rotary knob (5, 6, 10, 20, 30, 90, 100, 110, 120) as recited in one of Claims 1 through 10, an operator device (130) as recited in Claim 11, 12, 13, or 14, a multifunction operating device (40) as recited in Claim 15 or 16, or a steering wheel (2) as recited in Claim 17, 18, or 19.